



July 2022

Dear Parents and Carers

Re: Pastoral and Safeguarding Reminders

I would like to take this opportunity, as we draw near to the end of this academic year, to share some important pastoral information and to remind everyone of our reporting routes for any safeguarding concerns that may arise before the end of term or over the summer period.

In addition, I am also including some specific guidance on attendance as well as the use of social media applications.

Reporting safeguarding concerns reminder

We have a trained team of Designated Safeguarding Leads (DSLs). They are:

- Dr Hall (Senior DSL)
- Ms Jenkins
- Mr Tiley
- Mrs Harper
- Miss Yacoby
- Mr Alderman
- Mrs Wheeler
- Ms Bateman
- Mrs Day

Concerns can be raised via the DSL team or indeed any colleague in the school that a student feels comfortable to talk to. All staff receive annual safeguarding training, including how to provide support when disclosures are made.

If a student does not want to speak directly to a member of staff, then there are also students trained in anti-bullying and/or mental health support who can be approached. As well as providing immediate peer support, they will also ensure that the DSL team are informed.

We also have our Stay Safe (staysafe@testbourne.school) and No to Bullying (ntb@testbourne.school) alerts that can be used to raise concerns with our DSL Team. These will be monitored over the summer break.

Our Child Protection Policy is available on our school website [HERE](#)

Attendance

Since the pandemic, school attendance has been a national crisis. Attendance has dropped significantly and schools have rightly been tasked with robustly tackling this and getting children back to school. This information and guidance will help you prepare your child for September when there will be increased focus on attendance. At Testbourne, we consistently strive to achieve a goal of 100% attendance for all our students. As we recognise that some absence is unavoidable, our whole school attendance target is at least 98%. Absence from school can significantly impact on attainment and the wellbeing of students, as well as potentially leading to increased safeguarding risks. It is essential, therefore, that everyone has

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the highest expectations of our students and that we, families, and school staff, work together to support them in actively engaging in their learning, attending regularly and punctually.

Details related to attendance at TCS can be found on our website at [Attendance - Testbourne Community School](#)

When is my child allowed to miss school?

You can **only** allow your child to miss school if:

- They are too ill to attend – for most minor illnesses e.g., colds, headaches etc students do not need to take time off school. The NHS provide useful guidance [Is my child too ill for school? - NHS \(www.nhs.uk\)](#)
- You have advance permission from the school. You must complete an absence request form **before** you arrange for your child to have time away during term-time. Each request is considered on an individual basis. Absence requests will only be granted in **exceptional circumstances**, and it is for the school to decide what will be determined as exceptional. Examples of circumstances that are **not** exceptional include:
 - Cheaper holidays or holidays that have already been paid for
 - Absence that coincides with important school events such as the start of term or exams

As a general guideline ‘exceptional absence circumstances’ usually only apply to immediate family. Requests for leave related to extended family and friends are likely to be refused. If a child is taken out of school without any advance permission or for reasons other than illness, we may have to fine parents or begin other legal interventions for non-attendance.

What is the impact of non-attendance?

It is often better to look at this from the perspective of lost learning time rather than just a crude percentage attendance rate.

Any student with an attendance rate of less than 90% is regarded as persistently absent and an attendance rate of 50% or less is regarded as severely persistent absence. Non-attendance of these magnitudes will have a significant impact on the achievement of students resulting from the loss of learning time. The table below puts this into a context.

Students are expected to attend school for 190 days (or 38 weeks) in an academic year.

Attendance rate (%)	Number of school days lost per year	Approx. number of school weeks lost per year (year in brackets)	Number of school days lost over 5 years*	Approx. number of school weeks lost over 5 years*	Number of years lost over 5 years*
90	19	4 (0.1)	95	20	0.5
80	38	8(0.2)	190	40	1



70	57	11(0.3)	285	55	1.5
60	76	15(0.4)	380	75	2.0
50	95	19(0.5)	475	95	2.5
40	114	23 (0.6)	570	115	3.0
30	133	27 (0.7)	665	135	3.5
20	152	31 (0.8)	760	155	4.0
10	171	35 (0.9)	855	175	4.6

*if the attendance rate was to remain constant over 5 years

As you can see from the table above an attendance rate of 90% may not sound too low but this equates to **a month** of lost learning in an academic year and **half a year** over a student's school career from Year 7 to Year 11.

For a student with severe persistent absence (50%) this equates to **half a year** of lost learning in an academic year and **2.5 years** of lost learning over a student's school career.

It is essential that students are attending school, or their learning will be adversely affected, and this could have a hugely detrimental impact on their achievement overall.

In May 2022, the Department of Education published statistics highlighting the link between attendance and achievement¹. This is based on an analysis of the 2018/2019 GCSE examination results. The key headlines are:

1. Pupils who did not achieve grade 9 to 4 in English and maths GCSEs in 2019 had an overall attendance rate of 91.2% over the key stage, compared with 94.8% among pupils who achieved a grade 4 and 96.3% among pupils who achieved grade 9 to 5 in both English and maths.
2. Of those pupils who were persistently absent (<90%), 35.6% achieved grade 9 to 4 in English and maths. Among severely absent pupils (<50%), this figure was 11.3%. This compares to 83.7% of pupils with 100% attendance and 76.3% with an attendance rate between 100 and 95%
3. Similarly, 16.8% of persistently absent pupils and 5.0% of severely absent pupils achieved grade 9 to 5 in English and maths compared to 66.4% of pupils with 100% attendance and 54.4% who missed with an attendance rate between 100% and 95%.

We know the impact that COVID-19 has had both on lost learning and the wellbeing of students. That is why we needed a planned strategy for recovery - published earlier this year² Regular attendance to school is an essential part of that recovery.

We know that in most cases families want their children to attend school regularly. Sometimes families face difficulties, however, that means a child may not be attending. If you have any concerns about your child's attendance or if you need some support, then please speak to us as soon as possible. We are always keen to support and offer the benefit of our experience as it is much easier for all concerned to help students to attend if we can work together before things become a significant or serious problem.

¹[The link between absence and attainment at KS2 and KS4, Academic Year 2018/19 – Explore education statistics – GOV.UK \(explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/explore-education-statistics)

²[Mental-Health-Booklet-February-2022.pdf \(testbourne.school\)](#)



Social media apps and platforms

At the beginning of June, I shared a virtual assembly with all the students on the theme of Online Safety. I should like to raise your awareness of the key themes that I addressed in this assembly:

1. The use of certain social media platforms e.g., WhatsApp, Snapchat and Tik Tok – the age limitations and the risks associated with them.
2. Cyberbullying and sharing of nudes and semi-nude images – including the law on this.

To assist with this, I am including the following links from our school website:

Online Safety Advice for Parents and Carers June 2022	NOS Group Chats Guide (testbourne.school)
NOS - Snapchat Guide (testbourne.school)	NOS-TikTok-Guide (testbourne.school)
NOS WhatsApp Guide (testbourne.school)	NOS Respect Online For Everyone (testbourne.school)

The UK Safer Internet Centre published a blog outlining ways in which parents and carers can help keep their children safe as they start to spend more time online during the summer holidays. This can be found at [Staying safe online in the summer holidays - UK Safer Internet Centre](#)

Tips include having positive conversations with children about the internet; taking the opportunity to learn more about the apps, games and services children are using and find out about their reporting and blocking features; and make a family agreement about how all family members use the internet.

Finally, on behalf of the pastoral and safeguarding team at TCS I would like to wish our students and families a relaxing and safe summer break. As always if you have any concerns or questions then please do contact us.

Yours faithfully

Dr Hall
Deputy Headteacher (Pastoral)